

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for assisting in the remote safe opening of a tailgate pivotally attached to a bed of a truck, comprising:
5 an electro-mechanical actuator positioned inside the tailgate arranged to open tailgate latches; and
 a module which controls a descent of the tailgate.
2. The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the electro-mechanical actuator opens
10 the tailgate latches without interfering with a manual opening of the latches.
3. The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the module includes a pre-tensioned
15 spring with lost motion that arrests the tailgate in a partially opened position.
4. The apparatus of Claim 3, wherein the pre-tensioned spring is a torsion rod.
- 20 5. The apparatus of Claim 3, wherein the pre-tensioned spring is a spiral spring linkage on the tailgate.
6. The apparatus of Claim 1, further comprising an electrical switch which
25 sends a warning signal indicating the tailgate is ajar.
7. The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the module includes a viscous damper that slows the descent of the tailgate.
8. The apparatus of Claim 7, wherein the viscous damper is a gas spring.

9. An method for assisting in the remote and safe opening of a tailgate pivotally attached to a bed of a truck, comprising:
opening tailgate latches with an electro-mechanical actuator positioned inside the tailgate; and
5 controlling a descent of the tailgate with a module.
10. The method of Claim 9, wherein opening tailgate latches with an electro-mechanical actuator is accomplished without interfering with a manual opening of the latches.
- 10 11. The method of Claim 9, wherein controlling a descent of the tailgate with a module includes arresting the tailgate in a partially opened position with a pre-tensioned spring with lost motion.
- 15 12. The method of Claim 11, wherein the pre-tensioned spring is a torsion rod.
13. The method of Claim 11, wherein the pre-tensioned spring is a spiral spring linkage on the tailgate.
- 20 14. The method of Claim 9, further comprising indicating the tailgate is ajar.
15. The method of Claim 9, wherein controlling a descent of the tailgate with a module includes using a viscous damper to control the decent of the tailgate.
- 25 16. The method of Claim 15, wherein the viscous damper is a gas spring.

17. An apparatus for remotely opening a tailgate of a truck, comprising:
means for actuating tailgate latches to open the tailgate; and
means for controlling a decent of the tailgate.